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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 002318

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DEPT FOR IO AND FOR EUR/AGS (SAINT-ANDRE)

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [LE](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIA TO ATTEND FORCE GENERATION MEETING IN NEW YORK

REF: (A) STATE 124162 (B) VIENNA 2313

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Scott Kilner for reasons 1.4 (b) and d .

¶1. (C) Summary. Acting Economic-Political Counselor discussed reftel demarche on August 1 with Austrian Foreign Ministry officials Thomas Hajnoczi, Director for Security Policy and GASP issues, and Peter Huber from the International Organizations desk. The Austrian Permanent Mission to the UN in New York plans to send a representative to the Thursday Force Generation Meeting. Austria currently has six UNTSO/UNIFIL observers in the region and approximately 370 to 380 UNDOF peacekeepers in the Golan Heights. The GOA has no plans to remove these troops and is taking a wait-and-see approach regarding contributing additional peacekeepers to Lebanon. End Summary.

#### Location of Austrian UNTSO and UNDOF Peacekeepers

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¶2. (C) Before turning to the issue of force generation, Emboff clarified the location of Austrian UN peacekeepers in the region. According to Hajnoczi and Huber, there are currently six Austrian UNTSO peacekeepers in Lebanon. Two of these are assigned to UNIFIL. Following the July 26 death of a third Austrian UNTSO/UNIFIL observer in Lebanon (Ref B), the UN recalled these two Austrian UNTSO/UNIFIL observers to UNIFIL headquarters in the Lebanese city of Naqoura. Two more Austrian UNTSO officers are attached to UNDOF. According to Huber, these two UNTSO/UNDOF officers travel frequently and he did not know their current location. Finally, one Austrian UNTSO officer is located in Damascus and another is in Jerusalem.

¶3. (C) Austria has an additional 370 to 380 UNDOF peacekeepers in the Golan Heights. Hajnoczi and Huber said that the mandate for this mission could allow this figure to go up to 420 troops. The Austrian UNDOF mission has been active in the Golan region for over thirty years, and Hajnoczi and Huber said that because of their expertise in the area, Austrian troops form the backbone of this UNDOF mission and have been accepted and encouraged to remain in the region by both Syria and Lebanon. The UN also wants these Austrian troops to stay in the Golan Heights.

#### No Plans to Withdraw its Peacekeepers

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¶4. (C) Hajnoczi and Huber discussed the variety of recent calls from the public and from Austrian politicians for Austria to pull its peacekeeping troops out of the region

(Ref B), following the death of the Austrian UN observer and civilian casualties in Qana. They clarified the GOA,s position, stressing that the GOA has no plans to remove its peacekeepers from the region at this time. In their view, the upcoming Austrian general election (October 1) was a motivating factor behind many of the political calls for Austria to remove these peacekeepers. In reality, Hajnoczi stated that removing its troops would be an &instrument of last resort<sup>8</sup> for the GOA. According to Huber, the UN had recently confirmed to the GOA that the remaining Austrian UNTSO observers wanted to stay in the region.

#### Austria Noncommittal on Contributing Forces

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15. (C) Austria plans to attend the Force Generation Meeting on Thursday in New York. For the moment, however, the GOA remains noncommittal on contributing addition troops for peacekeeping. Hajnoczi said he doesn,t expect that the participants will be asked on Thursday to contribute peacekeepers, because there are still too many unanswered questions. None of the participants at the meeting, in his view, are likely to offer contributions until there is a ceasefire and a political agreement in place between Israel and Lebanon and a clear mandate for the peacekeeping mission.

Huber said the GOA is interested in the DPKO,s views on whether the UNIFIL mission should be enlarged or if the UN should create a new peacekeeping mission. Hajnoczi explained that there is also a national decision process in place for deploying forces, meaning that sending additional Austrian troops would require Parliamentary approval.

#### Comment

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16. (C) Austria has slightly over 1,200 peacekeeping troops deployed worldwide, with the majority serving in the Balkans.

Conceivably, the GOA could contribute an additional small contingent of troops to Lebanon. However, Austria's looming national election will cause the government to be even more cautious than usual in considering such a step.

Kilner